

Displaying St. Lawrence Market's 1831 drain could cost city \$2M

City's changing plans about how to display ancient drain delaying construction work

By John Rieti, [CBC News](#) Posted: Sep 20, 2017 3:32 PM ET Last Updated: Sep 20, 2017 6:03 PM ET

The discovery of a stone drain from 1831 proves St. Lawrence Market has always been a market for Torontonians — long before kale was a thing.

But now, the city's plan to showcase the ancient structure could cost nearly \$2 million, according to a staff report, and it's already putting the construction of a new building behind schedule.

- [Archeological finds put new St. Lawrence Market building 2 years behind schedule](#)

Mayor John Tory has called for city staff to find a cheaper way to protect the drain. But Coun. Janet Davis, who sits on the government management committee, which votes on whether or not to increase funding for the project at its meeting next week, says it's an important investment.

"This is an important heritage site and we have to treat it accordingly," Davis told CBC Toronto.

The archeological finds have proved that the north market was the site of one of Canada's oldest markets. Multiple connecting pipes, now visible in a wide-open pit, show how the market expanded.

Early plans to build a glass floor around the drainage system were scrapped. Now, city staff are recommending creating a glass-covered interpretation centre near the north end of the building, so people can still get a look at the drain —dubbed the "porcupine drain" due to the stones sticking out from its back.

The change of plans has delayed the construction tender from May to December. It's unclear whether asking staff to take another look at the matter would delay that further, but that's what the mayor is calling for.

"I believe it is my duty to ensure we do what we can to protect our city's heritage within the limited resources we have," Tory said in a statement.

"But I cannot justify spending an additional \$1.96 million for a 'drain feature' in the St. Lawrence Market redevelopment."

Tory notes Coun. Paul Ainslie, who chairs the government management committee, agrees.

Several business owners in the area, who declined to be interviewed, said they want to see the city get on with building, however they're not confident it will be finished on deadline.

Suzanne Kavanagh, of the St. Lawrence Market BIA, says farmers currently operating the Saturday market out of a tent just south of the main market building are also eager to get into the new structure.

But Kavanagh said while the delays have been unfortunate, this is a "window of opportunity" to preserve some of the neighbourhood's heritage that doesn't happen often.

She wants the future building to focus on educating people about the area's past.

"This is where the town started. This is where the history starts. This is where the story is," she said.

The features can't stay in the ground, a city report notes, because the new building requires underground parking.

The building isn't set to be complete until 2020. In total, the brand new five-storey structure is set to cost \$91.5 million, and will one day hold the city's traffic courts, the farmers market and more.

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